FREE GRATIS.

Every feller in the nation
Has upon his private list
Some peculiar pet temptation,
That he finds he can't resist,
Some one thing he can't say "No" to;
But this one seems queer to me;
All the fuss some folks 'll go to
Just to get a thing that's free.

P'raps some dry goods feller's givin'
Colored picture cards away.
Ain't no use to no one livin',
Crowds 'll wait in line all day.
Theaters! How they do abhor 'em,
"Modern plays aren't fit to see."
Tell 'em you've some passes for 'em,
Are they goin'? Sure! It's free.

To the church their vows are plighted,
In their seats they're always found;
And they seem to be sharp-sighted
Till the box is passed around.
Then it does beat all creation
How all-fired blind they be,
Seems as if they'd got salvation
Coz the parson said 'twas free.
—Joe Lincoln, in L. A. W. Bulletin.

A CASE IN EQUITY.

BY FRANCIS LYNDE.

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XII.
PRELIMINARIES.

Two days later, Philip was once more established at the Hotel Johannisberg, with the bustle and stress of the new city already beginning to efface the memory of the quiet days spent at the Duncan farm. The changes wrought in the few weeks were almost incredible. The encroaching flood of buildings had spread out over the vacant spaces; new structures of preposterous height and bulk reared themselves in localities where Philip remembered seeing the green grass of the meadow or the stubble of last year's cornfield. The streets were in the chaotic condition which precedes the laying of pavements; the gas and water companies rivaling each other in making the roadway impassable during the hurried trenching for pipes and conduits. The daily auction-sales of real estate continued, but they had been driven from the busy business center, and Mr. Fench's rostrum appeared only in the suburbs of Cheltenham Heights, Arlington Terrace, or Chiwassee-by-the-Stream.

Notwithstanding the pressure of a speculative atmosphere which might well have turned a more steadfast man aside, Philip held steadily to the purpose which had taken him back to town. He examined the records in the old courthouse, and found that a deed in Kilgrow's name had been duly entered with that drawn by Cates, and the only suspicious circumstance was that both documents had been recorded on the same day. In the light of Kilgrow's denial, the appearance on the record of the older deed established the fact of forgery on the part of some one; and while the presumption of guilt pointed toward Cates, the anonymous letter to Duncan fortunately saved Philip from being led astray at the outset.

Assuming that the deeds themselves were in the hands of the manager, Philip called upon Fench in the character of a possible purchaser of real estate.

"Yes, yes; I remember you—came up on the train with you. Thought you'd come around after you'd seen what we're doing." Mr. Fench was amiably voluble, and it was some time before Philip could find space to drive in the wedge of rejoinder. "Of course; glad to show you anything we've got. Inside or outside property, Mr. Thorndyke?"

"Inside, I think," Philip replied, examining the map spread out on Fench's desk; "about there, I should say"—placing his finger on two vacant lots well within the limits of the Cates tract.

"Ha! best location in the city—absolutely gilt-edge. I guess you know a

"I shall want a little time for examination of the title."

good thing when you see it, eh, Mr. Thorndyke?"

Philip bowed his acknowledgments and asked the price.

"Sixteen thousand apiece; and that's cheap."

"A month ago I should have laughed at you, Mr. Fench; now, I shall only say that I think you're a little ahead of the market."

Whereupon the manager leaned back, threw one leg over the arm of his chair, and proceeded to demonstrate by an argument in which volubility outran itself that the price asked was conservative rather than speculative; that Messrs. This and That, of Cincinnati, and Senator The Other, of Michigan, owners of the property on either side of the lots in question, had refused fabulous offers for their holdings—and much more to the same effect, punctuated and emphasized by Mr. Fench's right forefinger laid impressively in the palm of his left hand.

The visitor listened patiently, and for once in his life—having a definite object in view—forgot to be bored. When the manager ran out of breath, Philip said: "I still think your figure is too high, but we can talk of that later; I shall want a little time for investigation and for an examination of the title."

He was watching his antagonist to mark the first sign of discomposure. It came at the word title. Fench suddenly lost interest, and the self-assertive leg slid limply down from the arm of the chair.

"Yes, yes—of course; you'll want to know about these things, and I'd like to hold the bargain for you, but I can't. Our people won't let me block the market, not even when it's to their interest to do it."

Philip saw his advantage and pushed it. "I can see the justice of such a rule, and I'll not ask you to make an exception in my case. I presume you can satisfy me as to the soundness of the title: of course you have an abstract?"

Fench bounded from his chair with something that sounded very like an oath. "Excuse me, Mr. Thorndyke, I've got an engagement at the bank, and I'll have to turn you over to Mr. Sharpless, our attorney. He'll give you all the points on the—the title, and so forth. Just come with me, and I'll introduce you."

"One moment," interposed Philip. "If we're to do business together, it's only fair that you should know something about me. If you'll write or telegraph to Col. A. M. Van Cott, Temple Court, New York, he will have my banker wire you."

"Quite unnecessary, I assure you," objected the manager, who none the less made a hasty note of the address. "And you'll excuse my hurry, won't you?"—pushing Philip toward the door of the inner office. "I had plum forgot my appointment, as our Alabama friends would say. Mr. Sharpless, make you acquainted with Mr. Thorndyke. He wants to talk title with you on lots 13 and 14, block 18."

For once in a way, Philip regretted that he could not observe two men at the same instant. He was sure that the manager would try to put the lawyer on his guard, but Sharpless' impassive face was blandly inscrutable as he rose and held out his hand. From the fact that he was immediately given a high-backed chair facing the light of the window, which made an expressionless silhouette of the lawyer, Philip argued that the sign had been passed and understood; and the suspicion was confirmed by the first question he was called upon to answer.

"What makes you think that our title isn't perfect, Mr. Thorndyke?"

"I beg your pardon; I had raised no such question. It is merely a matter of prudence in a transaction involving so much money that one should be well assured of his title."

"That is very true. The lots you picked out are in a tract formerly known as the Cates farm; you can read the whole history of the tract in the records at the courthouse."

"Quite possibly; but one may have neither the time nor the inclination. A glance at your abstract would be quite sufficient for my purpose."

Sharpless swung back in his chair and slipped his hands into his pockets. "I wish I could oblige you," he said, "but I infer you've had little to do with property in Alabama. Such a thing as an abstract of title is almost unknown among people who can neither write their deeds nor read them after they are written. I began just as you have, and was glad enough, in the end, to fall back on the records."

Thorndyke knew this was an answer that Sharpless would never have made to another lawyer, since an abstract is nothing more than a circumstantial history of any given piece of property compiled from the records; but he was too shrewd to betray his profession, and he made no comment.

"I suppose you were able to satisfy yourself that your titles were all right?"

"Absolutely; we guarantee to defend our purchasers."

"Will you allow me to look at your deeds for the tract in question?"

"I should be glad to, but I can't do that, either. All the original documents are on file in the company's office in New York."

Philip was beaten for a moment, but he rallied immediately. "Will you authorize my solicitor to examine them?"

Sharpless lost his head at that, and Thorndyke gained his point. "Certainly not; such a proceeding would be unheard of. Our secretary would promptly refer the gentleman to me."

Philip rose and bowed courteously. "I'm sorry we can't arrive at an understanding; I should like to have those lots."

"But my dear sir"—Sharpless had quite recovered his self-control and was industriously cursing himself for having made the slip—"can't you see how unreasonable you are? Don't you suppose that among our hundreds of customers there are men who are quite as careful of their rights as you can be of yours?"

"And none of them have seen these deeds?"

"Not a man of them, I assure you. Go to any of them, and you'll find that they've taken our guarantee in perfect good faith."

"To whom would you refer me?"

"To anyone; to the president of the Chiwassee national bank, if you please."

"Very well; I'll think the matter over and see you again. Good morning."

When Thorndyke left the office he began to fear that the earlier deed, upon the discovery of which the very life of his case would depend, had been destroyed, and there was small comfort in the reflection that there was no apparent reason for the disappearance of both of them. That from Cates to the town company was undoubtedly genuine, and he could not understand why it, too, should be missing. He felt keenly the need of an adviser, but in a city where the interests of every other responsible person might be against him, he was afraid to trust anyone. To be sure, there were Protheroe and Duncan; but the first was in the service of the town company, and the Scotchman had already emptied himself of whatever suggestive material there was in him. Philip expected nothing further in the way of information from Fench or Sharpless, but, none the less, he sent a message to Col. Van Cott, asking him to give prompt attention to any inquiry from Allacoochee, suppressing only the fact of the sender's profession.

When that was done, Philip found himself once more among the uncertainties, but he made another journey to the courthouse for the purpose of copying the missing documents from the records. For two days he pored over these copies in his room at the hotel, searching with infinite patience for some clew that would point the way out of the tangle. A copy of a copy proved to be barren of suggestion, but he made a memorandum of the attesting notary's name, and on the third day he paid a visit to Squire Pragmore.

Nothing came of it, however. The notary's replies grew more indefinite as the inquiry progressed. His memory was at fault; he had acknowledged so many papers for the town company that he could not be expected to recollect the details of any one transaction. Thorndyke called attention to the fact that the older deed antedated by several years the beginning of the rush of business brought by the transfers of the town company; whereupon Pragmore took another tack. It was too long ago. He had doubtless acknowledged Kilgrow's signature, but he could remember none of the circumstances.

Thorndyke was baffled again, but another clew came to the surface when he

"The note and letter were both written on the same machine."

reached the hotel and found a note from Sharpless asking him to call at the company's office. He went, was received with a cordiality born of the favorable answer to the telegram sent by Fench to Col. Van Cott, and was shown the missing deeds with an air of reproachful frankness that almost disarmed him.

"Since you made a point of it, I wired our secretary to send them down," Sharpless explained; and as Philip read them he thought he could never be sufficiently grateful for the impulse that had led him to make the copies from the records. In poring over them he had well-nigh committed them to memory, and a single reading of the pretended originals convinced him that these were recent forgeries. The notary's attestation was genuine—a fact that at once implicated Pragmore—and if any further damnatory proof had been needed, it was supplied by a single circumstance in the acknowledgment. Pragmore had used a rubber stamp with a dotted line for his signature, and the words "notary public" beneath it, and the gummy ink of the stamp was still fresh enough to be blurred by the thumb of the reader.

Philip read the papers leisurely a second time and handed them back to the attorney.

"I'm sorry you went to so much trouble," he said. "I have given up the idea of buying inside, and have been thinking more particularly of trying something in the resident district."

Sharpless met him half way, and Philip thought he surprised a fleeting expression of relief on the shrewd face of the lawyer. "That's a sensible change. Between us, and leaving Mr. Fench out of the question, I believe there's more money to be made in Cheltenham Heights than on Broadway. I've scattered my own little bit of capital around on the edges."

Philip got away as soon as he could decently, and went back to his room to piece together the deductions which might fairly be drawn from the interview. The first point made clear was the undoubted guilt of the conspirators; if they had committed forgery for the purpose of imposing on a single customer, it was reasonable to conclude that they had not hesitated when the necessity was far more urgent. Another deduction was of even greater importance. Fench and Sharpless had a confederate in Pragmore, and here was a vulnerable point. If the notary set a price upon his silence, he might also be induced to speak, if it were made sufficiently profitable for him to do so. A third inference was that the original forgery and the deed from Cates had disappeared; otherwise the conspirators would not have been at the trouble of fabricating new ones.

Philip sat up late that night, studying the problem and trying to determine what he should do next, but his perseverance was rewarded only by the turning of one more conjecture into a certainty. The note which had called him to the attorney's office was in typewriting, and a comparison of its mechanical inaccuracies with those in the anonymous letter to Duncan proved that both were written on the same machine.

XIII.
LOSS AND GAIN.

It was early in July when Philip began the campaign of restoration. He made up his mind in the beginning that it was to be a race with death, and, believing this, he did not spare himself, though the heat during the weeks that followed was terrific. It was a dry summer, and in a drought the climate of the Chiwassee valley is, to say the least, something less than invigorating. For the first fortnight Philip went about with the feeling that the next day would finish him. Then, as the barriers hedging him on the side toward accomplishment grew into respectable mountains of difficulty, a winged spirit of energy, which was, perhaps, only an unused heritage from his hard-working father, began to possess him, breaking the bonds of habit and lifting him out of the rut of introspection. One morning he forgot to count his pulse, and the daily analysis of his symptoms was omitted for the first time in weeks; and that night he slept with open windows, through which the cool breeze from the mountain blew across the bed, and no harm came of it. He was too busy to think much about his infirmity at the time, but a week later he stepped upon the patent weighing-machine in the rotunda of the Johannisberg, and when the pointer failed to record the usual decrease he went to his room and dropped the half-used bottle of hypophosphites into the grate. That was the turning of the tide, and by the time his fellow-migrants in the exotic city were beginning to wilt under the fervid summer sun, Philip was growing stronger in body and saner in mind; finding a certain tonic in a series of defeats which were sharp enough to stimulate without being heavy enough to crush.

And while he wrestled with the difficulties of the legal problem, the fire burned within him, consuming some rubbish and shedding new light into the dusky corners of the soul-chamber hitherto obscured by the shadows of ill health and morbidness. The light was not altogether welcome, though it materially lessened the distance between the ostensible Philip and Philip the real. For one thing, it belittled the motive which was responsible for his work. Allowing the promptings of common humanity their full weight, the fact remained that his enthusiasm had for its starting-point a desire to win the approval of Elsie Duncan. That was the new ideal, and his saner thought told him that it was wretchedly inadequate; that it sprang from impulse and was degraded in the hour of its birth by unfaith. Unworthy as it was, it was still an ideal, and Philip lashed himself into a small fury of self-contempt when he discovered that it was no longer the motive for his exertions; that Elsie's approbation and Kilgrow's wrongs were secondary considerations in comparison with the strenuous urgings of a newly aroused ambition spurring him on to wring victory out of defeat for victory's sake.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

SHE INSISTED UPON BLACK.

Troubles of a Woman Where Mourning Goods Were Scarce.

"On my first circuit I had a lesson in human nature that I have never forgotten," said a Methodist minister.

"The circuit was in the mountains of West Virginia and among the members of my church was a widow, who, in addition to the loss of her husband, had suffered final earthly parting with four of her children, leaving but two, a girl and a boy, nearly grown.

"One night I was asked to hasten to her cabin, which I did, reaching there just in time to be with her son when he died from the effects of an accident.

"The mother, though deeply grieved, acted more calmly than I expected and early in the morning I went home, returning in the afternoon. I found the widow in a paroxysm of tears. I tried to comfort her with the usual Christian consolation. Finally she quieted down enough to say:

"'Tain't only thet he died. I know he's a heap better off.'

"'What is it, then?'

"'We kain't hev no funeral.'

"'No funeral?'

"'No. Sal's jess got back from th' sto' an' not a ya'd o' black hev they got. I never did 'tend no funeral 'thout black an' I ain't goin' ter now. He kin git 'long ter be buried 'thout a funeral better'n I kin bemean myse'f hav'n one when I ain't got nothin' fitten to wa'r.'

"And Jim was buried with no one present except his mother, his sister and me."—St. Louis Star.

An Apparition.

This is a true English ghost story of an unconventional kind. A young lady arrived late at night on a visit to a friend. She awoke in the darkness to find a white figure at the foot of the bed. While she watched the bedclothes were suddenly whisked off and the apparition vanished. After an anxious, not to say chilly, night the visitor went down, with little appetite, to breakfast. At the table she was introduced to a gentleman, a very old friend of the family, who had, she learned, also been sleeping in the house. He complained of the cold. "I hope you will excuse me," he said, to the hostess, "but I found it so cold during the night that, knowing the room next mine was unoccupied, I took the liberty of going in and carrying off the bedclothes to supplement my own." The room, as it happened, was not unoccupied, but he never learned his mistake.—San Francisco Argonaut.

Guarding the Money.

There are plenty of ingenious burglars in the world, but he would have to be a very ingenious burglar indeed who should find a way to rob the Bank of France. The measures taken for guarding the money are of such a nature that burglary would seem to be impossible. Every day when the money is put into the vaults in the cellar, and before the officers leave, masons are in attendance whose duty it is to wall up the doors of the vaults with hydraulic mortar. Water is then turned on, and kept running until the cellar is flooded. A burglar would thus have to work in a diving suit, and break down a cement wall before he could even begin to break into the vaults. When the officers arrive the next morning the water is drawn off, the masonry torn down, and the vaults opened. It is said that the treasures of the Bank of France are better guarded than any others in the world.—Youth's Companion.

No Effect.

Patient—But suppose your diagnosis should prove incorrect?

Physician—Oh, well, that would have no injurious effect on the disease.—Up-to-Date.

Yielding to Medical Advice.

"Mabel, the doctor says you drink entirely too much coffee. It is not good for you."

"Why, mamma, it doesn't hurt me a particle, and I like it too well to quit using it. I just couldn't get along without my coffee."

"And Mme. Loockes, the celebrated authority on beauty, says it is ruinous to the complexion."

"O, well, if the doctor thinks I ought not to drink it any more I'll drop it, of course."—Chicago Tribune.

Never.

Oh, when will folks remember
That 'tis a fearful crime
To forget that every rusty gun
Is loaded all the time!
—Cleveland Leader.

FOR AND AGAINST.

Minister—Well, Donald, what sort of day is it going to be?

Donald—Weel, sir, I'm no quite sure. You see, you prayed for fine weather yesterday, but my rheumaticks tells me it's goin' to rain, so I guess it's a toss up.—Pick-Me-Up.

Suspected a Mistake.

"Sim Wilkison has two mighty smart boys," remarked Mrs. Corntossel. "One of 'em hez gone to town an' learnt to paint; they say he puts a lot of atmosphere in his work."

"Mandy, ain't you thinkin' about the other boy?"

"His brother?"

"Yes. The one thet learnt to play the cornet."—Washington Star.

Their First Quarrel.

She—Well, I am ready to start now, Oliver, but I look like a perfect fright in this hat.

He—O, no, Clara! I can't allow you to think so. You—

She—Indeed, sir! You can't allow me! You might as well understand right now, Mr. Peduncle, that I am accustomed to thinking as I please!—Chicago Tribune.

Doctor's Orders.

The young woman who takes music lessons and practices scales announced to her friends that she was going away.

"Isn't it a rather sudden determination?"

"Yes. It's the doctor's orders."

"Why, you don't look a bit ill."

"Oh, I'm perfectly well. Auntie is the one who is ill."—Philadelphia Post.

A Fair Offer.

Hotel Clerk—Very sorry, sir, but I can't let your trunk go until your bill is paid.

Stranger—You can't? Why, I'm a city official of Chicago.

"Must have the cash."

"Well, I haven't any money with me, but I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you a street car franchise." — N. Y. Weekly.

Wiped It Up Himself.

"You needn't sweep the back yard today, Bridget," said Mrs. Cumso.

"Why, mum?"

"Your master bought a bicycle yesterday, and he's been out there for an hour trying to learn to ride."—Philadelphia North American.

The Verdict.

"Won't you try the chicken soup, judge?" asked Mrs. Small of her boarder, not noticing that he had gone beyond the soup stage in his dinner.

"I have tried it, madam," replied the judge. "The chicken has proved an alibi."—N. Y. Truth.

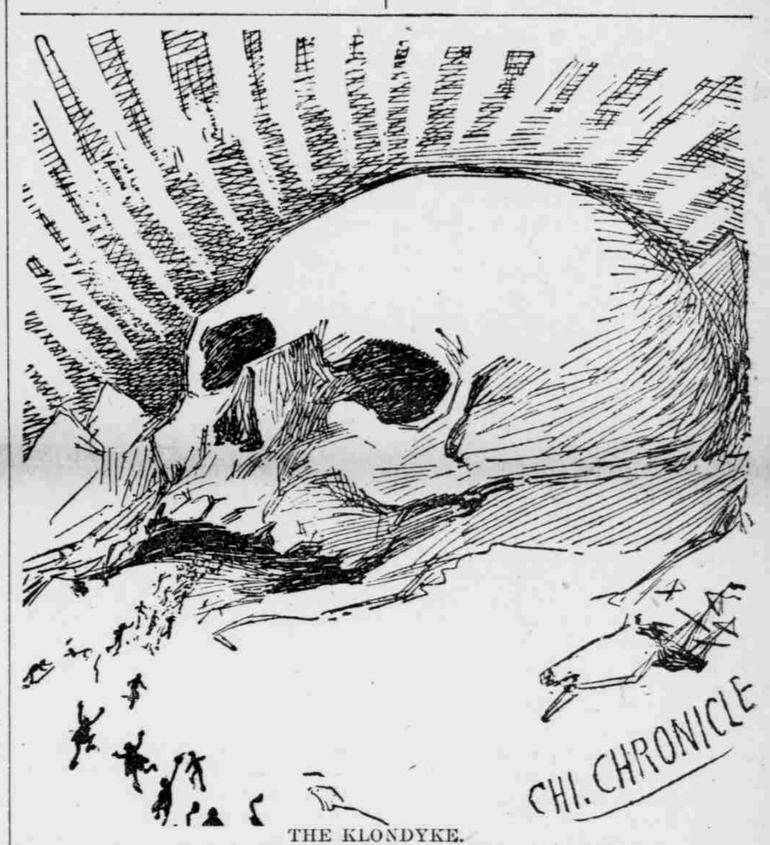
New Occupation.

Miss Bikeface—So you have given up advocating woman's rights?

Miss Passe—Yes, I now go in for women's lefts.

Miss Bikeface—Women's lefts? What's that?

Miss Passe—Widowers.—Tit-Bits.



THE KLONDYKE.
AS VIEWED BY THE CHICAGO CHRONICLE.

Mad as a March Hare.

"As you say my daughter is willing to marry you, I must tell you a secret. There is madness in our family."

"Indeed! You alarm me! What is your daughter's mania?"

"Her mania, sir, consists in her willingness to marry you!"—Tit-Bits.

Her Taste.

"Parkinson says his wife buys his ties, and they are never worn out."

"That explains it."

"Explains what?"

"Why he never wears them out. His wife buys them."—Cincinnati Commercial.

Other People's Money.

Mrs. Crabshaw—Do you know, my dear, why a woman is always more careful of her wedding dress than of any other?

Crabshaw—I suppose it is because she has to pay for it herself.—N. Y. Journal.

The Height of Courtesy.

Cobble—Sadie Slimson is polite, isn't she?

Stone—How so?

Cobble—Last night I asked her to take the big chair, and she said: "After you."—Puck.

Deep.

She—Your friend is certainly a handsome fellow and, they say, a very deep one.

He—Any man who was shallow could never hold as much as he does.—Detroit Free Press.

Drawing the Line.

"Why have you never tried to get Gabler to join your secret society?"

"Because it wouldn't be a secret society after he had joined it."—Chicago Tribune.

Shifting Responsibility.

"That Billings has more mean traits than any other man I ever knew."

"I suspected it from the way he was always talking about heredity."—Chicago Journal.

He Had Seen One Made.

Teacher—What is faith?

Johnny—That which enables folks to enjoy eating clam chowder.—Up-to-Date.

An Awful Drop.

"Why does Miss Elder always drop her eyes when she meets you?"

"If you will never give it away, I will tell you. She drops her eyes because I saw her drop her teeth one day."—Cincinnati Enquirer.

Drowning Them.

"I can't understand why she wears such fearfully loud clothes."

"Maybe it's so she can't hear things people say about her."—Chicago Journal.

Love's Thermometer.

No matter where the mercury stands,
Sly Cupid's game is played
Oftenest when the temperature
Shows just two in the shade.
—Chicago Times-Herald.

THE CAUSE OF HIS SADNESS.

Mr. Hardup—I always feel miserable when I come out here on the beach.

Miss Easie—I don't see why you should.

Mr. Hardup—But I do. It makes me feel sad when I think of my financial condition, and then see the ocean's roll.—Up-to-Date.

A Different Tint.

The chap who aims to "paint things red"
Should heed this friendly warning:
Whene'er he uses red at night
He'll feel blue in the morning.
—Chicago Times-Herald.

The Voice of Experience.

Newpop—What can I do to keep my baby from crying at night?

Oldpop—Turn on the gas full blast. He'll think it's daylight and go to sleep.—N. Y. World.